

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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IS HE POPENJOY?

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

CHAPTER LI. GUSS MILDMAY'S SUCCESS.

THE treatment which the marquis received at Rudham did not certainly imply any feeling that he had disgraced himself by what he had done, either at Manor Cross or up in London. Perhaps the ladies there did not know as much of his habits as did Mrs. Walker at Scumberg's. Perhaps the feeling was strong that Popenjoy was Popenjoy, and that therefore the marquis had been injured. If a child be born in British purple—true purple, though it may have been stained by circumstances—that purple is very sacred. Perhaps it was thought that under no circumstances should a marquis be knocked into the fireplace by a clergyman. There was still a good deal of mystery, both as to Popenjoy and as to the fireplace, and the marquis was the hero of these mysteries. Everyone at Rudham was anxious to sit by his side, and to be allowed to talk to him. When he abused the dean, which he did freely, those who heard him assented to all he said. The Baroness Baumann held up her hands in horror when she heard the tale, and declared the Church to be one grand bêtise. Mrs. Houghton, who was very attentive to the marquis, and whom the marquis liked, was pertinacious in her enquiries after Popenjoy, and cruelly sarcastic upon the dean. "Think what was his bringing up!" said Mrs. Houghton.

"In a stable," said the marquis.

"I always felt it to be a great pity that Lord George should have made that

match; not but what she is a good creature in her way."

"She is no better than she should be," said the marquis. Then Mrs. Houghton found herself able to insinuate that perhaps, after all, Mary was not a good creature, even in her own way. But the marquis's chief friend was Jack De Baron. He talked to Jack about races, and billiards, and women—but though he did not refrain from abusing the dean, he said no word to Jack against Mary. If it might be that the dean should receive his punishment in that direction he would do nothing to prevent it. "They tell me she's a beautiful woman. I have never seen her myself," said the marquis.

"She is very beautiful," said Jack.

"Why the devil she should have married George, I can't think. She doesn't care for him the least."

"Don't you think she does?"

"I'm sure she don't. I suppose her pestilent father thought it was the nearest way to a coronet. I don't know why men should marry at all. They always get into trouble by it."

"Somebody must have children," suggested Jack.

"I don't see the necessity. It's nothing to me what becomes of the property after I'm gone. What is it, madam?" They were sitting out on the lawn after lunch, and Jack and the marquis were both smoking. As they were talking the baroness had come up to them, and made her little proposition. "What! a lecture! If Mr. De Baron pleases, of course. I never listen to lectures myself—except from my wife."

"Ah! dat is vat I vant to prevent."

"I have prevented it already by sending

her to Italy. Oh, rights of women! Very interesting; but I don't think I'm well enough myself. Here is Captain De Baron, a young man as strong as a horse and very fond of women. He'll sit it out."

"I beg your pardon; what is it?" Then the baroness, with rapid words, told her own sad story. She had been deluded, defrauded, and ruined by those wicked females, Lady Selina Protest and Dr. Fleabody. The marquis was a nobleman whom all England, nay, all Europe, delighted to honour. Could not the marquis do something for her? She was rapid and eloquent, but not always intelligible. "What is it she wants?" asked the marquis, turning to Jack.

"Pecuniary assistance, I think, my lord."

"Ja, ja. I have been bamboozled of everything, my lord marquis."

"Oh hang it, De Baron shouldn't have let me in for this. Would you mind telling my fellow to give her a ten-pound note?" Jack said that he would not mind; and the baroness stuck to him pertinaciously, not leaving his side a moment till she had got the money. Of course there was no lecture. The baroness was made to understand that visitors at a country house in England could not be made to endure such an infliction; but she succeeded in levying a contribution from Mrs. Montacute Jones, and there were rumours afloat that she got a sovereign out of Mr. Houghton.

Lord Giblet had come with the intention of staying a week, but the day after the attack made upon him by Mrs. Montacute Jones news arrived which made it absolutely necessary that he should go to Castle Gossling at once. "We shall be so sorry to miss you," said Mrs. Montacute Jones, whom he tried to avoid in making his general adieux, but who was a great deal too clever not to catch him.

"My father wants to see me about the property, you know."

"Of course. There must be a great deal to do between you." Everybody who knew the affairs of the family was aware that the old earl never thought of consulting his son; and Mrs. Montacute Jones knew everything.

"Ever so much; therefore I must be off at once. My fellow is packing my things now; and there is a train in an hour's time."

"Did you hear from Olivia this morning?"

"Not to-day."

"I hope you are as proud as you ought

to be of having such a sweet girl belonging to you." Nasty old woman! What right had she to say these things? "I told Mrs. Green that you were here, and that you were coming to meet Olivia on the 27th."

"What did she say?"

"She thinks you ought to see Mr. Green as you go through London. He is the easiest, most good-natured man in the world. Don't you think you might as well speak to him?" Who was Mrs. Montacute Jones that she should talk to him in this way? "I would send a telegram if I were you, to say I would be there to-night."

"Perhaps it would be best," said Lord Giblet.

"Oh, certainly. Now mind, we expect you to dinner on the 27th. Is there anybody else you'd specially like me to ask?"

"Nobody in particular, thank ye."

"Isn't Jack De Baron a friend of yours?"

"Yes, I like Jack pretty well. He thinks a great deal of himself, you know."

"All the young men do that now. At any rate I'll ask Jack to meet you." Unfortunately for Lord Giblet, Jack appeared in sight at this very moment. "Captain De Baron, Lord Giblet has been good enough to say that he'll come to my little place at Killancodlem on the 27th. Can you meet him there?"

"Delighted, Mrs. Jones. Who ever refuses to go to Killancodlem?"

"It isn't Killancodlem and its little comforts that are bringing his lordship. We shall be delighted to see him; but he is coming to see— Well, I suppose it's no secret now, Lord Giblet?" Jack bowed his congratulations, and Lord Giblet again blushed as red as a rose.

Detestable old woman! Whither should he take himself? In what farthest part of the Rocky Mountains should he spend the coming autumn? If neither Mr. nor Mrs. Green called upon him for an explanation, what possible right could this abominable old harpy have to prey upon him? Just at the end of a cotillon he had said one word! He knew men who had done ten times as much, and had not been as severely handled. And he was sure that Jack De Baron had had something to do with it. Jack had been hand in hand with Mrs. Jones at the making up of the Kappa-kappa. But as he went to the station he reflected that Olivia Green was a very nice girl. If those ten thousand pounds were true they would be a great

comfort to him. His mother was always bothering him to get married. If he could bring himself to accept this as his fate he would be saved a deal of trouble. Spooning at Killancodlem, after all, would not be bad fun. He almost told himself that he would marry Miss Green, were it not that he was determined not to be dictated to by that old harriidan.

Many people came and went at Rudham Park, but among those who did not go was Guss Mildmay. Aunt Julia, who had become thoroughly ashamed of the baroness, had wished to take her departure on the third day; but Guss had managed to stop her. "What's the good of coming to a house for three days? You said you meant to stay a week. They know what she is now, and the harm's done. It was your own fault for bringing her. I don't see why I'm to be thrown over because you've made a mistake about a vulgar old woman. We've nowhere to go to till November, and now we are out of town for Heaven's sake let us stay as long as we can." In this way Guss carried her point, watching her opportunity for a little conversation with her former lover.

At last the opportunity came. It was not that Jack had avoided her, but that it was necessary that she should be sure of having half-an-hour alone with him. At last she made the opportunity, calling upon him to walk with her on Sunday morning when all other folk were in church—or, perhaps, in bed. "No; I won't go to church," she had said to Aunt Ju. "What is the use of your asking 'why not?' I won't go. They are quite accustomed at Rudham to people not going to church. I always go in a stiff house, but I won't go here. When you are at Rome you should do as the Romans do. I don't suppose there'll be half-a-dozen there out of the whole party." Aunt Ju went to church as a matter of course, and the opportunity of walking in the grounds with Jack was accomplished. "Are you going to Killancodlem?" she said.

"I suppose I shall, for a few days."

"Have you got anything to say before you go?"

"Nothing particular."

"Of course I don't mean to me."

"I've nothing particular to say to anybody just at present. Since I've been here that wretched old marquis has been my chief fate. It's quite a pleasure to hear him abuse the dean."

"And the dean's daughter?"

"He has not much good to say about her either."

"I'm not surprised at that, Jack. And what do you say to him about the dean's daughter?"

"Very little, Guss."

"And what are you going to say to me about her?"

"Nothing at all, Guss."

"She's all the world to you, I suppose?"

"What's the use of your saying that? In one sense she's nothing to me. My belief is that the only man she'll ever care a pin about is her husband. At any rate she does not care a straw for me."

"Nor you for her?"

"Well, yes I do. She's one of my pet friends. There's nobody I like being with better."

"And if she were not married?"

"Heaven knows what might have happened. I might have asked her to have me, because she has got money of her own. What's the use of coming back to the old thing, Guss?"

"Money, money, money!"

"Nothing more unfair was ever said to anyone. Have I given any signs of selling myself for money? Have I been a fortune-hunter? No one has ever found me guilty of so much prudence. All I say is that having found out the way to go to the devil myself, I won't take any young woman I like with me by marrying her. Heavens and earth! I can fancy myself returned from a wedding-tour with some charmer, like you, without a shilling at my banker's, and beginning life at lodgings, somewhere down at Chelsea. Have you no imagination? Can't you see what it would be? Can't you fancy the stuffy sitting-room with the horsehair chairs, and the hashed mutton, and the cradle in the corner before long?"

"No I can't," said Guss.

"I can; two cradles, and very little of the hashed mutton; and my lady wife with no one to pin her dress for her but the maid-of-all-work with black fingers."

"It wouldn't be like that."

"It very soon would, if I were to marry a girl without a fortune. And I know myself. I'm a very good fellow while the sun shines, but I couldn't stand hardship. I shouldn't come home to the hashed mutton. I should dine at the club, even though I had to borrow the money. I should come to hate the cradle and its occupant, and the mother of its occupant. I should take

to drink, and should blow my brains out just as the second cradle came. I can see it all as plain as a pikestaff. I often lie awake the whole night and look at it. You and I, Guss, have made a mistake from the beginning. Being poor people we have lived as though we were rich."

"I have never done so."

"Oh yes, you have. Instead of dining out in Fitzroy Square and drinking tea in Tavistock Place, you have gone to balls in Grosvenor Square and been presented at Court."

"It wasn't my fault."

"It has been so, and therefore you should have made up your mind to marry a rich man."

"Who was it asked me to love him?"

"Say that I did, if you please. Upon my word I forget how it began, but say that it was my fault. Of course it was my fault. Are you going to blow me up for that? I see a girl, and first I like her, and then I love her, and then I tell her so; or else she finds it out without my telling. Was that a sin you can't forgive?"

"I never said it was a sin."

"I don't mind being a worm, but I won't be trodden upon overmuch. Was there ever a moment in which you thought that I thought of marrying you?"

"A great many, Jack."

"Did I ever say so?"

"Never. I'll do you justice there. You have been very cautious."

"Of course you can be severe, and of course I am bound to bear it. I have been cautious, for your sake!"

"Oh Jack!"

"For your sake. When I first saw how it was going to be—how it might be between you and me—I took care to say outright that I couldn't marry unless a girl had money."

"There will be something, when papa dies."

"The most healthy middle-aged gentleman in London! There might be half-a-dozen cradles, Guss, before that day. If it will do you good, you shall say I'm the greatest rascal walking."

"That will do me no good."

"But I don't know that I can give you any other privilege."

Then there was a long pause during which they were sauntering together under an old oak tree in the park. "Do you love me, Jack?" she then asked, standing close up to him.

"Lord bless my soul! that's going back to the beginning."

"You are heartless, absolutely heartless. It has come to that with you, that any real idea of love is out of the question."

"I can't afford it, my dear."

"But is there no such thing as love that you can't help? Can you drop a girl out of your heart altogether, simply because she has got no money? I suppose you did love me once?" Here Jack scratched his head. "You did love me once?" she said, persevering with her question.

"Of course I did," said Jack, who had no objection to making assurances of the past.

"And you don't now?"

"Whoever said so? What's the good of talking about it?"

"Do you think you owe me nothing?"

"What's the good of owing, if a man can't pay his debts?"

"You will own nothing then?"

"Yes, I will. If anyone left me twenty thousand pounds to-morrow, then I should owe you something."

"What would you owe me?"

"Half of it."

"And how would you pay me?" He thought awhile before he made his answer. He knew that in that case he would not wish to pay the debt in the only way in which it would be payable. "You mean then that you would—marry me?"

"I shouldn't be afraid of the hashed mutton and cradles."

"In that case you—would marry me?"

"A man has no right to take so much on himself as to say that."

"Psha!"

"I suppose I should. I should make a devilish bad husband even then."

"Why should you be worse than others?"

"I don't know. Perhaps, I was made worse. I can't fancy myself doing any duty well. If I had a wife of my own I should be sure to fall in love with somebody else's."

"Lady George, for instance."

"No; not Lady George. It would not be with somebody whom I had learned to think the very best woman in all the world. I am very bad, but I'm not just bad enough to make love to her. Or rather I am very foolish, but not just foolish enough to think that I could win her."

"I suppose she's just the same as others, Jack."

"She's not just the same to me. But I'd rather not talk about her, Guss. I'm going to Killancodlem in a day or two, and I shall leave this to-morrow!"

"To-morrow!"

"Well—yes; to-morrow. I must be a day or two in town, and there is not much doing here. I'm tired of the old marquis, who is the most ill-natured brute I ever came across in my life, and there's no more fun to be made of the baroness. I'm not sure but that she has the best of the fun. I didn't think there was an old woman in the world who could get a five-pound note out of me; but she has."

"How could you be so foolish?"

"How indeed! You'll go back to London?"

"I suppose so. Unless I drown myself."

"Don't do that, Guss."

"I often think it will be best. You don't know what my life is—how wretched. And you made it so."

"Is that fair, Guss?"

"Quite fair! Quite true! You have made it miserable. You know you have. Of course you know it."

"Can I help it now?"

"Yes you can. I can be patient if you will say that it shall be some day. I could put up with anything if you would let me hope. When you have got that twenty thousand pounds——?"

"But I shall never have it."

"If you do—will you marry me then? Will you promise me that you will never marry anybody else?"

"I never shall."

"But will you promise me? If you will not say so much as that to me you must be false indeed. When you have the twenty thousand pounds will you marry me?"

"Oh, certainly."

"And you can laugh about such a matter when I am pouring out my very soul to you? You can make a joke of it when it is all my life to me! Jack, if you will say that it shall happen some day—some day—I will be happy. If you won't—I can only die. It may be play to you, but it's death to me." He looked at her, and saw that she was quite in earnest. She was not weeping, but there was a drawn, heavy look about her face which, in truth, touched his heart. Whatever might be his faults, he was not a cruel man. He had defended himself without

any scruples of conscience when she had seemed to attack him, but now he did not know how to refuse her request. It amounted to so little. "I don't suppose it will ever take place, but I think I ought to allow myself to consider myself as engaged to you," she said.

"As it is, you are free to marry anyone else," he replied.

"I don't care for such freedom. I don't want it. I couldn't marry a man whom I didn't love."

"Nobody knows what they can do till they're tried."

"Do you suppose, sir, I've never been tried? But I can't bring myself to laugh now, Jack. Don't joke now. Heaven knows when we may see each other again. You will promise me that, Jack?"

"Yes; if you wish it." And so at last she had got a promise from him. She said nothing more to fix it, fearing that in doing so she might lose it; but she threw herself into his arms, and buried her face upon his bosom.

Afterwards, when she was leaving him, she was very solemn in her manner to him.

"I will say good-bye now, Jack, for I shall hardly see you again to speak to. You do love me?"

"You know I do."

"I am so true to you! I have always been true to you. God bless you, Jack! Write me a line sometimes." Then he escaped, having brought her back to the garden among the flowers, and he wandered away by himself across the park. At last he had engaged himself. He knew that it was so, and he knew that she would tell all her friends. Adelaide Houghton would know, and would, of course, congratulate him. There never could be a marriage. That would, of course, be out of the question. But, instead of being the Jack De Baron of old, at any rate free as air, he would be the young man engaged to marry Augusta Mildmay. And then he could hardly now refuse to answer the letters which she would be sure to write to him, at least twice a week. There had been a previous period of letter-writing, but that had died a natural death, through utter neglect on his part. But now—It might be as well that he should take advantage of the new law, and exchange into an Indian regiment.

But, even in his present condition, his mind was not wholly occupied with Augusta Mildmay. The evil words which had been spoken to him of Mary had not been

altogether fruitless. His cousin Adelaide had told him over and over again that Lady George was as other women—by which his cousin had intended to say that Lady George was the same as herself. Augusta Mildmay had spoken of his Phoenix in the same strain. The marquis had declared her to be utterly worthless. It was not that he wished to think of her as they thought, or that he could be brought so to think; but these suggestions, coming as they did from those who knew how much he liked the woman, amounted to ridicule aimed against the purity of his worship. They told him—almost told him—that he was afraid to speak of love to Lady George. Indeed he was afraid, and within his own breast he was in some sort proud of his fear. But nevertheless he was touched by their ridicule. He and Mary had certainly been dear friends. Certainly that friendship had given great umbrage to her husband. Was he bound to keep away from her because of her husband's anger? He knew that they two were not living together. He knew that the dean would at any rate welcome him. And he knew, too, that there was no human being he wished to see again so much as Lady George. He had no purpose as to anything that he would say to her, but he was resolved that he would see her. If, then, some word warmer than any he had yet spoken should fall from him, he would gather from her answer what her feelings were towards him. In going back to London on the morrow he must pass by Brotherton, and he would make his arrangements so as to remain there for an hour or two.

CHAPTER LII. ANOTHER LOVER.

THE party at Rudham Park had hardly been a success; nor was it much improved in wit or gaiety when Mrs. Montacute Jones, Lord Giblet, and Jack de Baron had gone away, and Canon Holdenough and his wife, with Mr. Groschut, had come in their places. This black influx, as Lord Brotherton called it, had all been due to consideration for his lordship. Mr. De Baron thought that his guest would like to see, at any rate, one of his own family, and Lady Alice Holdenough was the only one whom he could meet. As to Mr. Groschut, he was the dean's bitterest enemy, and would, therefore, it was thought, be welcome. The bishop had been asked, as Mr. De Baron was one who found it expedient to make sacrifices to respect-

ability; but, as was well known, the bishop never went anywhere except to clerical houses. Mr. Groschut, who was a younger man, knew that it behoved him to be all things to all men, and that he could not be efficacious among sinners unless he would allow himself to be seen in their paths. Care was, of course, taken that Lady Alice should find herself alone with her brother. It was probably expected that the marquis would be regarded as less of an ogre in the country if it were known that he had had communication with one of the family without quarrelling with her. "So you're come here," he said. "I didn't know that people so pious would enter De Baron's doors."

"Mr. De Baron is a very old friend of the canon's. I hope he isn't very wicked, and I'm afraid we are not very pious."

"If you don't object, of course I don't. So they've all gone back to the old house?"

"Mamma is there."

"And George?" he asked in a sharp tone.

"And George—at present."

"George is, I think, the biggest fool I ever came across in my life. He is so cowed by that man whose daughter he has married that he doesn't know how to call his soul his own."

"I don't think that, Brotherton. He never goes to the Deanery to stay there."

"Then what makes him quarrel with me? He ought to know on which side his bread is buttered."

"He had a great deal of money with her, you know."

"If he thinks his bread is buttered on that side, let him stick to that side, and say so. I will regard none of my family as on friendly terms with me, who associate with the Dean of Brotherton or his daughter after what took place up in London." Lady Alice felt this to be a distinct threat to herself, but she allowed it to pass by without notice. She was quite sure that the canon would not quarrel with the dean out of deference to his brother-in-law. "The fact is, they should all have gone away as I told them, and especially when George had married the girl and got her money. It don't make much difference to me, but it will make a deal to him."

"How is Popenjoy, Brotherton?" asked Lady Alice, anxious to change the conversation.

"I don't know anything about him."

"What?"

"He has gone back to Italy with his mother. How can I tell? Ask the dean. I don't doubt that he knows all about him. He has people following them about, and watching every mouthful they eat."

"I think he has given all that up."

"Not he. He'll have to, unless he means to spend more money than I think he has got."

"George is quite satisfied about Popenjoy now," said Lady Alice.

"I fancy George didn't like the expense. But he began it, and I'll never forgive him. I fancy it was he and Sarah between them. They'll find that they will have had the worst of it. The poor little beggar hadn't much life in him. Why couldn't they wait?"

"Is it so bad as that, Brotherton?"

"They tell me he is not a young Hercules. Oh yes—you can give my love to my mother. Tell her that if I don't see her it is all George's fault. I am not going to the house while he's there." To the canon he hardly spoke a word; nor was the canon very anxious to talk to him. But it became known throughout the country that the marquis had met his sister at Rudham Park, and the general effect was supposed to be good.

"I shall go back to-morrow, De Baron," he said to his host that same afternoon. This was the day on which Jack had gone to Brotherton.

"We shall be sorry to lose you. I'm afraid it has been rather dull."

"Not more dull than usual. Everything is dull after a certain time of life, unless a man has made some fixed line for himself. Some men can eat and drink a great deal, but I haven't got stomach for that. Some men play cards, but I didn't begin early enough to win money, and I don't like losing it. The sort of things that a man does care for die away from him, and of course it becomes dull."

"I wonder you don't have a few horses in training."

"I hate horses, and I hate being cheated."

"They don't cheat me," said Mr. De Baron.

"Ah, very likely. They would me. I think I made a mistake, De Baron, in not staying at home and looking after the property."

"It's not too late now."

"Yes, it is. I could not do it. I could not remember the tenants' names, and I

don't care about game. I can't throw myself into a litter of young foxes, or get into a fury of passion about pheasants' eggs. It's all beastly nonsense, but if a fellow could only bring himself to care about it, that wouldn't matter. I don't care about anything."

"You read."

"No, I don't. I pretend to read—a little. If they had left me alone I think I should have had myself bled to death in a warm bath. But I won't now. That man's daughter shan't be Lady Brotherton, if I can help it. I have rather liked being here, on the whole, though, why the deuce you should have a German impostor in your house, and a poor clergyman, I can't make out."

"He's the deputy bishop of the diocese."

"But why have the bishop himself, unless he happen to be a friend? Does your daughter like her marriage?"

"I hope so. She does not complain."

"He's an awful ass—and always was. I remember when you used always to finish up your books by making him bet as you pleased."

"He always won."

"And now you've made him marry your daughter. Perhaps he has won there. I like her. If my wife would die, and he would die, we might get up another match, and cut out Lord George after all." This speculation was too deep even for Mr. De Baron, who laughed and shuffled himself about, and got out of the room.

"Wouldn't you have liked to be a marchioness," he said, some hours afterwards, to Mrs. Houghton. She was in the habit of sitting by him and talking to him late in the evening, while he was sipping his curaçoa and soda-water, and had become accustomed to hear odd things from him. He liked her because he could say what he pleased to her, and she would laugh and listen, and show no offence. But this last question was very odd. Of course she thought that he referred to the old overtures made to her by Lord George; but in that case, had she married Lord George, she could only have been made a marchioness by his own death—by that and by the death of the little Popenjoy of whom she had heard so much.

"If it had come in my way fairly," she said with an arch smile.

"I don't mean that you should have murdered anybody. Suppose you had married me?"

"You never asked me, my lord."

"You were only eight or nine years old when I saw you last."

"Isn't it a pity you didn't get yourself engaged to me then? Such things have been done."

"If the coast were clear I wonder whether you'd take me now."

"The coast isn't clear, Lord Brotherton."

"No, by George. I wish it were; and so do you too, if you'd dare to say so."

"You think I should be sure to take you."

"I think you would. I should ask you, at any rate. I'm not so old by ten years as Houghton."

"Your age would not be the stumbling-block."

"What then?"

"I didn't say there would be any. I don't say that there would not. It's a kind of thing that a woman doesn't think of."

"It's just the kind of thing that women do think of."

"Then they don't talk about it, Lord Brotherton. Your brother, you know, did want me to marry him."

"What, George? Before Houghton?"

"Certainly. Before I had thought of Mr. Houghton."

"Why the deuce did you refuse him? Why did you let him take that little——"

He did not fill up the blank, but Mrs. Houghton quite understood that she was to suppose everything that was bad. "I never heard of this before."

"It wasn't for me to tell you."

"What an ass you were."

"Perhaps so. What should we have lived upon? Papa would not have given us an income."

"I could."

"But you wouldn't. You didn't know me then."

"Perhaps you'd have been just as keen as she is to rob my boy of his name. And so George wanted to marry you! Was he very much in love?"

"I was bound to suppose so, my lord?"

"And you didn't care for him!"

"I didn't say that. But I certainly did not care to set up housekeeping without a house, or without the money to get one. Was I wrong?"

"I suppose a fellow ought to have money when he wants to marry. Well, my dear, there is no knowing what may come yet. Won't it be odd, if, after all, you should be Marchioness of Brotherton

some day? After that, won't you give me a kiss before you say good-night."

"I would have done if you had been my brother-in-law—or, perhaps, if the people were not all moving about in the next room. Good-night, marquis."

"Good-night. Perhaps you'll regret some day that you haven't done what I asked."

"I might regret it more if I did." Then she took herself off, enquiring in her own mind whether it might still be possible that she should ever preside in the drawing-room at Manor Cross. Had he not been very much in love with her, surely he would not have talked to her like that.

"I think I'll say good-bye to you, De Baron," the marquis said to his host that night.

"You won't be going early."

"No; I never do anything early. But I don't like a fuss just as I am going. I'll get down and drive away to catch some train. My man will manage it all."

"You go to London?"

"I shall be in Italy within a week. I hate Italy, but I think I hate England worse. If I believed in heaven, and thought I were going there, what a hurry I should be in to die."

"Let us know how Popenjoy is."

"You'll be sure to know whether he is dead or alive. There's nothing else to tell. I never write letters except to Knox, and very few to him. Good-night."

When the marquis was in his room, his courier, or the man so called, came to undress him. "Have you heard anything to-day?" he asked in Italian. The man said that he had heard. A letter had reached him that afternoon from London. The letter declared that little Popenjoy was sinking. "That will do, Bonni," he said. "I will get into bed by myself." Then he sat down and thought of himself, and his life, and his prospects—and of the prospects of his enemies.

BY THE RIVERSIDE.

ON TRENT.

It is, if not a very new, yet a very true observation, that few natural objects possess more individual character than rivers. Mountains also have character—individuality of a marked kind. The eye must be endowed with but little speculation, which cannot recognise the difference between the friendly mountain, sloping

gently to its attendant valleys, glittering with streamlets hanging like silvery scarves to its richly-wooded sides, and the austere Alpine peak lifting its lonely head above a shroud of eternal snow. It is, in the parlance of the day, a "far cry" from the Righi to the Finsteraarhorn, and farther still, from the purple hills of England to the haughty Cervin. There are mountains hospitable, sheltering cabins and hamlets under their protecting wing; and mountains sternly inhospitable, frowning the wayfarer back, nay, hurling him at times to depths immeasurable. But they labour under one disadvantage. They pay a heavy penalty for the majesty of repose. Mountains, bating volcanoes, exercise their power without movement. They collect clouds, and hurl down torrents, but without any sacrifice of their sublime immobility. Wherefore, to know a mountain, is to know it, despite the assertion of Alpine climbers, that a mountain—that is, with regard to ascents over the changing snow surfaces—is "never the same on two different days." It has its moods, of course, its spring and autumn, its summer and winter aspect. But the outline of a hill remains the same. Its profile cuts the sky with the well-known line, unalterable, at least in any space of time easily realised by ordinary human beings.

With a river it is far otherwise. The same stream may, with advance in life, change its character a score of times. In the ordinary course of things it enjoys a boisterous youth among the moors and fells, dancing merrily along and laughing as it goes. In middle age, it broadens into sober respectability; and as it nears the sea, savours of weak old age, checked by tides, and uncertain of course, carrying with it diseases, such as sand-banks and the like, and blocking up its own mouth with one last effort of blundering, impotent senility. But this routine river-life is by no means led by all. Vast streams, like the Orinoco and the Amazon, hurl into the astonished sea a world of waters, which changes its complexion, and rolls back its feebler tide. Roaring Missouri scoops away its banks, and thick with mud drags the clearer Mississippi to the sea, breaking down levees, flooding the surrounding country, and asserting its own individuality, till spent of fury it slinks into the Gulf by almost unnavigable channels. We have the authority of Goldsmith for the wandering proclivities of the Po, but the Po is a home-keeping river compared with the

Indus. This last mighty stream has a queer habit of striking out, or rather constructing, new paths for itself. Charged with earthy spoils, it speeds southward on a species of causeway, built from the accumulation of silt. Bit by bit, this causeway rises above the level of the surrounding plain, until the fretful stream rends the banks it has made for itself, and takes a new course towards the sea. During historic times, the Indus has shifted its course over and over again, its total variation to the westward having been about three hundred miles. Once fertile regions are now arid for want of the fertilising but fugitive stream, and sandy deserts have bloomed into life at its welcome presence. The Hoangho is another river famous for its vagaries, by turns devastating and fertilising a vast area of country, and the freaks of the Nerbudda are too well known to need recapitulation. In this green England of ours, rivers exhibit none of the grand and vastly inconvenient peculiarities of their tropical congeners, but they have their characteristics nevertheless. Not one rivals Thames and Severn in the enjoyment of pastoral, metropolitan, and industrial life, but many have chosen a groove of their own. Mole, Colne, and Derwent are as unlike Dove, Tees, and Ribble as can be imagined. Differing from all of these, Trent has a speciality peculiarly its own. It is, par excellence, an industrial river; not beautiful, perhaps, save here and there by fits and starts, but sternly practical, serious, and useful, now and then losing patience with the frivolity of anglers, and overflowing its banks in sudden rage, but in the main a model stream—a river of facts.

Born in Staffordshire, the Trent is not long before it gets to business. Passing close to Stoke-on-Trent, it "drains," as geographers have it, the so-called "potteries," no very savoury task, and then laboriously hies onward past busy Burton and industrial Nottingham, through historic Newark, Gainsborough, and Crowle, to the Humber; a line of country to which until recently a waterway was of the last importance. To none of these towns was the Trent, for awhile, more helpful than to Burton—a spot which, for a hard work-a-day look, has no match in the three kingdoms. There is no temptation at Burton to linger by the way. The very houses wear a repellent air, and almost say to the visitor: "No loitering allowed. Transact your business, and go about

your business. Everything here must be barrelled up and headed down, and forwarded forthwith. It is of no use to think you can sit down or hang about. There is no place to sit down, and there is the railway ready to take you somewhere else."

This is the bleak kind of welcome conveyed by the aspect of Burton-on-Trent; which, although joyless in itself, contributes in no small degree to the happiness of the world at large. It is a town of railway tracks and sidings, of vats and of barrels. I do not know whether they make anything but beer there. I tried one morning to find out, and addressed myself to the work with all seriousness and earnestness of purpose; but all the information I elicited was that Mr. Gretton's horses would surely run at Shrewsbury, that it was "good business" to back them, and that, if I made haste I might get to the racecourse in time to speculate on the hope of Burton-on-Trent. This was the only indication of a tendency towards dissipation that I observed during a short residence at Burton. To a person who has passed the town portion of his existence in capital cities, it is a matter of wonder how people pass their evenings in country towns of the size of Burton—in towns, that is to say, containing some twenty or thirty thousand inhabitants. Even when another hundred thousand is added to their number the question is no nearer solution. It once happened to me to pass a few days in a great city in Canada. It was early spring. The rink and the theatre, which enjoy but a spasmodic life, were closed, and there was absolutely not a nigger minstrel or a learned pig in the place. I asked a resident, a Scot, what on earth people did of an evening. "Eh!" replied my friend, "what should they do? They drink whisky-toddy, man." What could they do at Burton, I wondered. They could not drink beer, that was quite certain. It was ridiculous to suppose that people who during working hours never escaped the idea of beer for an instant; who looked on beer, smelt beer, thought of beer, and wrote about beer; who either made barrels, or filled them, or branded them, or totted them up and charged for them; who dwelt in an atmosphere of malt and hops from morning till night, could experience that physical and intellectual refreshment enjoyed by Prince Bismarck and some other celebrated personages in the consumption of beer. And where were they to drink it? It strikes me that if any strange person were to establish a

beer-garden at Burton, the place would forthwith be dubbed "Green's Folly"—after the amiable and appreciative method of country folk in naming what they do not understand. Nobody would, I should think, go near it, except on the dreadful occasion of one of those brass band competitions, which make northern country towns additionally hideous for two or three days in the year. It was once my fate to pass a day in Chesterfield, famous for its twisted church steeple, on the occasion of a brass band competition. From Sheffield and other Yorkshire towns came crowds of eager hornblowers, waking the echoes of the market-place as they strutted along. Chesterfield itself being either sympathetic or timorous, I am not certain which, had closed its shutters and given up business for the day. It became a species of Sunday, made noisy by the blare of trumpet and cornet, bugle and French horn. On an occasion like that even Burton might be made lively in a ghastly kind of way, and a beer-garden might flourish for an instant; but at other times it would be a dreary waste.

There is, then, no amusement of any kind at Burton-on-Trent—that is to say, of a public character. As I sought farther, I found that Mr. Bass has established a club for his clerks. I paid a visit to that institution, and found it well supplied with books and newspapers, billiards, chess, and other engines of innocent dissipation. This is a great advantage for Mr. Bass's clerks, and, as the firm good-naturedly think, for them also. In the club, a youngster, given to the colouring of meerschauum pipes, and the steady practice of his "middle-pockets," lives in the fierce light of public opinion. He moves under the eyes of his fellows, be they seniors or juniors. He may not bet, to drink he is ashamed. Far better is this for young Burton than glass after glass of bad whisky at the bar of a public-house, where the only attraction is a barmaid, equally remarkable for the pertness of her manners, and the splendour of her ribands.

As Burton signifies then, not mainly, but wholly beer, let us look at Burton and its beery origin. It was not much of a place before hops came into England. Whether an Irish lady, Modwen by name, did or did not found the abbey of Burton, on the island of Andressey, and live to the age of one hundred and thirty years, and whether the soundness of the liquor brewed in the neighbourhood conduced to the lon-

gevity of that pious foundress, is, to us who live a thousand years after her, but a small matter. It imports far more that Burton, either from the water drawn from its wells—for it is needless to say that Trent does not provide the liquid constituents of bitter beer—or from other causes, has long been a centre of the brewing interest. Tutbury Castle, during the imprisonment of Mary Queen of Scots, was supplied with beer from Burton, and Burton ale was well known in London as early as 1630, when it was sold at the sign of The Peacock in Gray's Inn Lane. Strong Burton ale long continued a popular drink, even among persons of quality, for The Spectator mentions it as being in great demand among the visitors to Vauxhall Gardens. The trade of Burton was much helped by the opening up of the Trent navigation by the Act of 1698. Brought into water communication with Gainsborough, Hull, and the Baltic Ports, the little Staffordshire town sent forth its beer to Northern Europe, where it obtained a ready sale at high prices. Both the Czar Peter and the Empress Catherine were much addicted to Burton ale, which being strong, sweet, and plentiful, was admirably adapted to the Russian palate. All through the last century, Burton increased in wealth. Its breweries grew in number and size; but it was not till after the invention of "India Pale Ale" that it rose to its present importance. This famous beer was neither invented at Burton, nor by Bass or Allsopp. It was the happy thought of a London brewer, named Hodgson, who first brewed ale specially for India at the Old Bow Brewery, then carried on by the firm of Abbott and Hodgson. For several years "Hodgson's best" was a household word in India, and wonderful stories were told of the quantity of this choice ale consumed under the shade of the "pagoda tree," by that time pretty well denuded of its fruit. The great demand for ale in India caused a captain in the service of John Company, named Chapman, to suggest the brewing of a special brand at Burton-on-Trent. This was in 1823, and during the past half century the names of Bass and Allsopp have become known wherever the human throat experiences the pangs of thirst. These two firms have by no means a monopoly of the Burton trade in ale, strong, bitter, or mild, which is shared by a couple of dozen of great brewers. Messrs. Bass, Ratcliff, and Gretton may,

however, be accepted as the typical house. The founder was a Mr. William Bass, who must have been a man of considerable business talent, inasmuch as, besides brewing ale, he was just a century and a year ago the proprietor of a large carrying business, which he transferred to the celebrated house of Pickford and Co., when he found that the brewery required his undivided attention.

A great change has come over Bass's brewery since the time of this clever and energetic gentleman. The works, which now cover nearly two hundred acres, are one vast network of railway tracks, along which speed numerous locomotives. Jumping on one of these at the bidding of my courteous guide, I am whisked past huge ranges of buildings devoted to the brewing of beer, and to the numerous handicrafts involved in barrelling and storing. Arrived at our journey's end, I notice an array of barrels, the like whereof has never gladdened my eyes. As round shot was in the old time piled at the royal arsenals, so now are legions of barrels piled on the "ale bank," as it is called, waiting for transport to the ends of the earth. Beyond these pyramids of casks lie the new malt-houses—the last expression of skill in this particular vein of construction. The barley for malting is carefully selected, and—as I am informed by a young gentleman dressed in a light suit of fashionable build, who, I am told, is the maltster—is drawn from many sources, English and foreign. As I walk through the enormous range of buildings dedicated to barley and malt, I pass mountains of grain, bought by local agents, forwarded to Burton, and there screened, in order to remove all extraneous fragments and broken grain. The operation takes place on the top floor of the malt-houses, which communicate with one another by means of iron bridges and galleries, from which I look down on the wilderness of cask-mountains beyond. Below are the steeping-cisterns, in which the barley remains for forty-eight hours or more, according to the character of the grain, and various other conditions of temperature and so forth, carefully scanned by the fashionable young gentleman aforementioned, whom, from his conversation, I find to be not only courteous and elegant in manner, but thoroughly conversant with every branch of science bearing upon malt and brewing. In the cisterns—about the size of swimming-baths—the barley loses the few impurities,

such as dust and broken husk, which have escaped the screen; and after its bath in water of crystal clearness is transferred to the couching-frames, when Britannia sends the proper officer to gauge their contents and calculate her dues. Once more I trudge up endless stairs, and note great seas of barley undergoing the process of "flooring," during which germination takes place. Another walk upstairs, and donning a pair of maltsman's shoes, I find myself in the kiln. Beneath are vast furnaces, but the heat from them is nicely graduated, commencing from ninety degrees of Fahrenheit and increasing to one hundred and sixty-five degrees, and diminishing again gradually. All these floors of the malting-houses are ventilated with the greatest care. It would be thought that the great doors and windows opening out on every side would supply ample ventilation, but it is explained to me that draughts from the sides would not ventilate the middle of the floor, which, therefore, must be provided for by special arrangement. When the malt is finished in the kiln it is again screened, to remove the rootlets or "comb," and is then ready for the brewer. This malt-comb is by no means considered as waste; it is much coveted for feeding stock, and finds a ready market. Even the dust which falls through the perforations in the kiln-tiles is sold for money as manure for pasture land. It has already been told in *ALL THE YEAR ROUND** how beer is made, and I therefore merely stroll through the great brewing-houses, marking by the way the exquisite new machinery of every kind, and chatting with my guide as to the disposition of the enormous quantity of "grains" resulting from the great brewing operations. These grains are a regular article of commerce, are "sold forward" to customers, and are distributed as secondary food for stock over a large area of country by the North Staffordshire and the Midland Railways. In like manner the hops, after being boiled with the sweet wort, are subjected to hydraulic pressure, which extracts the whole of the wort, and leaves them in a dry compressed mass, worth some few shillings per ton for manure and as bedding for stock.

Turning out in a brewing season some eight hundred thousand barrels of ale of various kinds, consuming a quarter of a

million quarters of malt, between thirty and forty thousand hundredweight of hops, and doing an annual business of about two-and-a-half millions sterling, Messrs. Bass employ few short of two thousand hands in their vast establishment. Providing a club for their clerks, and taking care of their workpeople to an extent which has earned them well-deserved popularity, they are yet thorough men of business, and know how to protect themselves against combinations of skilled workmen.

To those interested in the relations between capital and labour, it is most curious to note that this house of Bass and Co.—perhaps the most popular in England among its workpeople—is yet remarkable for the regular and systematic introduction of machine work, and the reduction of skilled labour to its lowest terms. The great brewers have by degrees so organised every department of their works that they stand in no fear of a strike. In the present condition of the labour market their position is almost unique. It has not been secured without much thought, and large outlay in labour-saving machinery of all kinds. Persistent efforts in this direction have produced an establishment working like one vast machine, and in no wise dependent on the freaks and schemes of the leaders and advisers of the working-man. Saving the chemist-in-chief, his assistant, the three chief brewers and their staff of eighteen assistants, and the chief maltster and his staff, all of whom are gentlemen of considerable scientific attainments, there is very little of skilled labour among the two thousand persons employed by Messrs. Bass. So admirably has the almost automatic system of working been organised, that men can be taken from the plough and set to work in almost any—save the chemical—department of this vast brewing and malting machine. The steam cooperage is in itself a marvel, and is regarded with permissible pride by its organisers.

Now a barrel is not, at first sight, a thing likely to be made well by machinery, but I soon see that it can be done, if capital for the purchase of sufficient skilfully-made "plant" be forthcoming. The material, Baltic oak, arrives in the form of staves, and the hoops come mainly from South Staffordshire. The staves, when properly seasoned, are sorted, cut to the proper length, and arranged in quantities sufficient to make a cask—be it hogshead, barrel, or kilderkin. Passing

* *ALL THE YEAR ROUND*, New Series, Vol. 16, p. 180, May 6, 1876, "Hops and Beer."

rapidly from hand to hand, these staves are put into machines which cut them to the required shape, shave them to the proper thickness, and smooth their edges, so that they may fit perfectly. Under my very eyes the rough bundle of staves grows into a possible barrel, while other hands feed the successive machines which form the head—cut, smoothed, shaved down, and polished up, all by machinery. Right and left fly the chips, and the shavings cumber the floor. Not, however, for long. Swept—this is done by hand—towards an opening in the great steam cooperage, chips and shavings vanish into a pneumatic tube, which sucks them in and delivers them into sacks arranged in a waggon waiting to carry them away. Licked into shape, the staves are next placed in a kind of cage, steamed into the proper curve, and are then ready to be hooped into a cask. As each stave is numbered, the workman has no difficulty in arranging them in proper order, and the cask is hooped and headed in an incredibly short space of time. It has now to be tested as to its capacity; and if any slight inaccuracy has crept in it is remedied, and the cask, approved perfect, is transferred to the great branding-house to receive the well-known trade-mark.

As I walk through a wilderness of barrels, I hear that those made by steam are, on the average, to be preferred to those made by hand. "You see," remarks my informant, "that a first-class skilled workman—a complete cooper—is apt to make one very good, almost perfect cask, another not quite so good, and a third wrong in capacity, or defective in some point or other. Say what you will, there is an uncertainty about hand-work and rule of thumb. What we want is certainty; and we get it by the means you see; by using machinery for everything but hooping and heading the barrels. As we turn out an average of a thousand barrels a week, accuracy is of considerable importance. Everything is gauged and cut by machinery, even to the heads and the bungs, and as you can see for yourself, the work is as near perfect as possible. Yet the work is so subdivided, that we have not the slightest fear of a strike. If our men were foolish enough not to know when they are well off and well cared for, we could replace them with others, who in a week or two could do their work, that is, mind a machine, as well as they can."

Every barrel made by Messrs. Bass

resembles in one respect a bank-note. When finished, it is duly numbered and entered in a cask-book, with its date of production. This volume is a record of the lives and vicissitudes of casks. When a cask returns from its first journey, it must go through a regular process before being sent into the world again. Its head is knocked out, it is thoroughly cleansed, and if quite sound and free from mustiness, is refilled, or stowed away till required in one of those vast stacks. Before, however, it is again entrusted with its measure of ale, it is rinsed and carefully "smelt" by two important officers called "smellers," who are responsible for its sweetness. Should they find it acid, it is subjected to a rigorous washing, steaming, and subsequent lime-washing, and if, as is sometimes the case, it resists these vigorous measures, it is condemned as incurable and sold out of stock. Some casks, like some ships, live to a good old age, retaining their sweetness and soundness, only requiring that their joints should once in a few years be tightened with rushes.

Before quitting Messrs. Bass's works there is a ceremony to be performed, to omit which would be to cast an undeserved slur upon them. In a cool and airy store-house, I am proffered samples of beer, not only of the most perfect manufacture, but in the most superb condition. Just one sip of the nut-brown, rich in malt extract, and fragrant with hop; then a long, strong pull at the "bitter" specially brewed for India, bright, sparkling, and of that delicious natural coolness which no artificial icing can produce, and I step out into that dreary labyrinth of railways known as Burton-on-Trent, speculating on the sport enjoyed by Nottingham anglers wielding their delicate tackle farther down stream.

THE HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

It was early spring. There was a soft balmy feeling in the air. The bare branches of the almond-trees were dotted over with tiny rose-coloured buds, a few brave primroses were thrusting up their pale yellow blossoms out of the dark brown mould. Women were crying "Hyacinths!" in the street, and tempting passers-by with baskets heaped with their tall odorous clumps of white and pink and creamy bells. There were birds twittering in the square, and a stir of new life and freshness all through the world; but Mr. Robarts was not so well.

He had been confined to the house for several days; and I went over to sit with him one afternoon, so that Magdalen might get out for a little fresh air.

"You won't leave him till I do come back," she said, lingering even after her bonnet was on. "Promise me, doctor. He is so disobedient to orders that he is not to be trusted by himself; but if you——"

"Yes," I said, "I will stay, don't be afraid. I can promise you that or—anything else that you ask." The exceeding loveliness of her face had struck me even more that day than usual. I could not take my eyes off it till she was gone; and then, as I turned back to her father, I met his fixed on me. They were keen grey eyes; and in their hard scrutiny I read that which told me without any words that something in my face or tone had betrayed me, and that my secret was no longer my own. Well, I had naught to be ashamed of, and after the moment's shock I was man enough to meet his gaze fully and calmly. He was silent for a little; and then said:

"I have just found out something. Do you know what it is, Dr. Elliot?"

"I think so. Isn't it that there are more fools in the world than you were aware of a few moments back? You have discovered that I care for your daughter. I have known it myself for some time back; but what does it matter? I hoped no one would ever guess it; and, after all, it is not my fault."

To my unutterable surprise he put out his hand to me, smiling.

"What is not your fault? To tell you the truth, I have once or twice before suspected your feelings for Magdalen; and I am glad you have owned it. You call it a folly, though. In what way?"

"Only that it is a folly for any man to stake his whole heart on something he has no hopes of winning."

"Hem! You are modest; or—may I ask if Magdalen has already convinced you of the hopelessness of your affection?"

"I have never so much as hinted at its existence to her. I should have thought you knew me well enough for that, Mr. Robarts. Indeed, I fancied that you——"

"Wouldn't have heard of it? Well, to be frank with you, when the idea first flashed across my mind, it did startle me; but I have thought over it since then; and I don't mind telling you that, if I were to give my child to any man, I would rather it were you than another."

I was struck dumb with astonishment. He smiled again and went on:

"It is simply this—I know you. You are an honourable and kind-hearted man. I believe you are in a position to keep her in the style she has been accustomed to; and also that, if she were your wife, you would be good and faithful to her. Am I right, or not?"

I rose and answered— Well, well, what do the words matter now? But I must have made my meaning plain at any rate; for he pressed my hand kindly.

"There! you are a good fellow, doctor, and I believe you. There is one stipulation, however, which I must make. Will you agree to it?"

"You have been so wonderfully generous to me, Mr. Robarts, it would be hard if I did not agree to anything you asked."

"Don't take my child from me then. I have a fancy I am not here for very long; but I could not live without her. You will promise me."

I knew she would not have left him; but I promised notwithstanding.

"Thank you; and—don't say anything to her yet awhile. I do not believe that she cares for you at present, or guesses at your caring for her, or I would not ask it; but overhastiness might only upset her peace and damage your own cause. Leave her alone for awhile."

I assented; and meanwhile I will tell you what I did. I set to work to beautify and refurnish my ugly old house from garret to cellar; and I got together pictures, and old china, and quaint brasses, and I cunningly persuaded Magdalen—old Robarts laughing in his sleeve at us all the while—that I had little taste and less time of my own for such things; and so won her to lend me hers in the choice of nearly all I purchased; being wishful that they should be all according to her own taste, so that the home, to which one day I hoped to bring my darling, should not repel her by its unlikeness to that she left. I remember her saying to me one day that she should quite look on it as her house when it was finished; and I hardly know whether the words gave me most pain or pleasure. Would she have said it if there had been any feeling in her heart akin to that in mine for her? And yet she took such a frank and eager interest in it all; and was so warmly cordial and trustful with me! I knew at least that she liked me, and how often is not liking only love's prelude?

I had much secret doubt and fear and anxiety about that time; but I look back on it now, and know that I was very happy in it all the same.

The end came sooner than any of us expected. Mr. Robarts was taken suddenly worse one evening in early May. A succession of fainting fits followed; and though he rallied from them, it was only to pain too keen for his exhausted frame to bear. Before midday on the morrow he was dead; and Magdalen knelt weeping by the bed where a few moments back he had tried to clasp our two hands in his dying fingers, and had whispered in hoarse, gasping tones:

"Take care of her, Elliot. I trust her to you. Magdalen, remember, I—leave—you—to his care."

Ah me! it was more than "care" that I longed to give her then, my poor darling, in the first hour of her desolation; but no one save an utterly self-engrossed coward would have spoken to her of love and marriage at such a time; and it was enough that she did not repel the affectionate authority which, for her own good, I felt bound to use to her; and submitted to be ruled and tended by me with a meek, childlike passivity which made her more than ever dear and precious to me.

"I will wait a week," I said to myself. "One week more, and then, after the funeral, I will speak to her. I do not think she will send me away," and I did not. There was something in the look of her eyes when she thanked me, in the clinging touch of her fingers when they rested in mine, which, through all sense of my unworthiness, made me hope at last.

Mr. Robarts had few relations, and no near or trusted ones. He had left a written request that I would take charge of his papers, burn all that were not of importance, and arrange the funeral and legal matters. It would spare Magdalen somewhat; and she was to write to an elderly cousin in Scotland, who had long ago agreed to come to her in the event of such a contingency; but her letter found the elderly cousin ill and unfit to travel for several days, and Magdalen would not go to her or leave the house till after the funeral; neither had I the heart to urge it.

"You are here, and you do all that I want, or that anyone could do for me. I am much happier alone," she had said with a pitiful quiver about her beautiful

mouth; and I took her hands in mine and answered:

"My dear, you shall do just as you like. If being alone is a comfort to you, no one shall disturb you," and certainly I did not. I had to be there every day on business; but very often I did not see her at all. I was busy with the papers I have mentioned; and she rarely left her own room. The little garden on the leads was gay with spring flowers, and the ivy was putting forth all its fresh green shoots; but she never went into it now, and it had lost all its beauty for me.

I was over at the house one evening turning out the old oak cabinet, where her father had once told me he kept most of his private letters. It was a wearisome task enough, for they had all to be looked through before being destroyed; but I was glad to do it, for I knew that many would have pained Magdalen sadly; and in course of time came to one, set aside in an old pocket-book by itself, and without an envelope. I had glanced through it and had seen the signature before I realised that it was not written to Mr. Robarts at all, but to his daughter, from one Guy Latham—the letter written by Magdalen's lover, which had never been suffered to reach her. I don't know much about love-letters, and I suppose this was not different to the generality; yet I felt that I would rather die than that she should see this, the passionate appeal of a young man desperately in love, and furious at the cruelty which had separated him from its object. "I know you love me," he wrote. "Be true to me; and neither time nor absence shall shake my fidelity. Your father has behaved like a brute and a tyrant to us; but only wait for me, my angel, till I can make a home for you, and we shall be happy in spite of him," and I, reading it, wondered whether, if she had seen it, she would have granted the prayer, and gone on waiting for him till then. It was a question which was very terrible to me, and I shut the cabinet, and sat down to ponder over the letter. The doubt was what I should do about it even now.

Her father had kept it from her, and had never intended it to reach her eyes. It had been written six years ago, when she was only a young girl. The young man had never been seen or heard of since. The probability was that he had long since forgotten her, and she—well, she had wept for him, and had dried her tears and grown happy again as she had been before he

crossed her path. What earthly end could showing her this letter serve now, save to upset her peace of mind, add a cruel tinge of bitterness to her grief for her father, and perhaps stir up some morbid scruple as to her right to accept the new love which was waiting to be offered to her? I thought of it all night and all the next day, and in all ways and lights, but this was the result to which I invariably came; and in the end I resolved to abide by it. I did not destroy the letter, however; something within me made me averse to doing so; and I locked it up again with other papers which were to remain in my keeping.

The funeral was on the following day. Magdalen would go, though I tried to persuade her to the contrary, for it was a cold, raw day, and I was afraid for her health; but, though pale as death, she was very calm, and even at the graveside made no moan or crying; but stood there with locked hands and head a little bent, a tall, slender figure, all black from head to foot, cut out against the faint red colour of an afternoon sky—a figure so solitary and pathetic in its voiceless bereavement, that it comes back to me even now with the longing I had then to take her in my arms, and so show her that love had not left her alone in the world after all.

"But to-morrow," I said to myself, as I put her and cousin Jane, who had arrived in time for the ceremony, into the carriage. "Only till to-morrow! We shall both know then." Was it some mocking fiend which whispered to me that if she cared for me she would never have kept her face so steadily averted from mine, and answered me as briefly and coldly as I fancied she had done all that day—the day which saw the completion of the last services I could do for her? But what did it matter? I would have served her all my life long, even if I had known I could never have so much reward as a smile from her. Young men, when they make love, do it as they run and leap, for the prize they hope to win. With men of my age it is different. When we love a woman, it is not what we can get from her, but what we can do for her, that we think about.

I went to see her on the following day. She was in the dining-room, the servant said, and alone; and there I found her. I had gone in unannounced, and I must have startled her, for a deep crimson spot came into her cheek as she rose to greet

me, and I felt her hand tremble in mine. It had never done so before.

"I did not expect you," she said, a little formally. "It is kind of you to come, when I have been taking up so much of your time of late. Cousin Jane has only just gone upstairs. I will ring for her," and she was reaching out her hand to the bell when I stopped her.

"Do not ring just yet," I said. "I have something I want to say to you first. Do you mind? It is not a good time, perhaps, but I will not keep you long, and I have waited——" My voice was husky, and I broke off. I did not tell her how long I had waited. Her sweet, soft eyes met mine with a questioning glance. Somehow she must have guessed that it was no trifle I had come about, for her face had grown very white again; yet even then the trouble and yearning which I could not keep out of mine touched her. She answered very gently:

"You may keep me as long as you like. Do you think I have forgotten what you were to papa, and that he left me to your care? What is it you want to say to me?"

She was still looking up at me. The late coldness which had so distressed me had quite gone from her manner. It was grave and full of trust. I had got my opportunity at last, and how did I use it? Why, I let go her hand, turned away from her sweet eyes, and, crossing the room, unlocked the oak cabinet in the corner, and took out Guy Latham's letter. I had decided that it ought never to be shown her. My mind was quite clear on the subject. My reason and my conscience were alike convinced, and—— Well, well, I daresay I am a blundering, inconsistent fellow; but I couldn't help it. I could not take advantage of an absent man when it came to the point, no, not even if I were to win Magdalen by so doing; and so I just put the letter in her hand and said:

"I have something to show you first. I found this among your father's papers. It was written over six years ago; but he thought it better not to give it you then. You will not blame him even if he was wrong; for he meant it for your good. Do you know the handwriting?"

For the moment—one glad moment—I hardly thought she did; for she looked up at me, and then at the paper with a puzzled, wondering glance. Then I, looking on with what a sore-wrung heart no

man can know, saw the blood suddenly rush up into her face, dyeing throat and cheeks and brow with one vivid crimson glow. Her lips parted with a quick shivering gasp, her great eyes dilated with a look half fierce, half tender and yearning; and then a cloud came over them, "there came a mist and a driving rain," and down came the tears in a blinding torrent, bowing the fair head, and shaking the slender figure, and blotting all the faded words with their passionate drops, as she hid her face above them, murmuring the name which I had read at the bottom of the letter; but which none had heard cross her lips for many a weary year.

"Guy! My Guy! Oh! why did I never see it!"

I said nothing. What could I say—aye, or do either, in such a case? When wife and home, and all that this world holds for a man has just been swept away by a mountain avalanche, it is not words that you expect from him. He may know that in that one moment his heart has broken; but what of that? Hearts break every day; and mine—even then the worst ache in it was to see her grief and be so impotent to heal it. Yes, that was the worst of it; that passion of sorrow told me that my hope was vain; I should never now have the right to comfort and protect her as I had prayed I might; and I turned my face away, and crushed my hands together with a stifled groan for the vanishing of my foolish dream.

It was she who recalled me. Far more quickly than I had thought for she checked her grief, brushing the tears from her eyes with the air of one long used to repression, and touched me half timidly on the arm, as though she feared I was displeased with her.

"I am so sorry," she said gently. "Dr. Elliot, I do not know what you are thinking of me; but it was the sudden shock; and it is so long since—" Her voice broke, and her eyes wandered to the letter which her other hand held pressed gently against her bosom. "I loved him," she said, looking up at me again with a sweet simplicity that was above all disguise, "and we were parted. I do not blame my dear father; and it is all over now. I ought not to have given way so, and before you. What was it that you wanted to say to me?"

Wanted! Ah, but the want was past now. I too could have said: "It is all over," but looking at the gentle courage

in her fair pale face, I could not but be brave myself.

"Nothing of any importance," I answered, taking her hands in mine. It was to be for the last time; though she did not know it. "I had meant to ask you something; but it does not matter, and you have answered it, not knowing, already. Let me speak of this letter instead. You will know I did not mean to grieve you when I showed it you. What I want is to see you happy, my child. Only be frank with me; and do not forget that you are in my care. I will not fail you. You love this—this young man. Do you know if he is true to you; or where we can find him?"

The red fire-light was on her face, but I saw it whiten through all the ruddy glow; and felt her hands tremble. Yet her pathetic eyes never wavered in their straightforward glance.

"Do you not know?" she said. "Dr. Elliott, you are very good. I never knew how good till to-day; but you cannot help me in the way you think. There is nothing now of Guy to find but his grave. He died five years ago, just before we came to this house."

"Died!" I must have said it; but it did not sound like my voice, and the room seemed reeling with me. "Yes," she said softly, the tears brimming up into her eyes again, "it was barely twelve months after—after papa sent him away. He went to Australia. The friends where we first met gave me news of him two or three times; but it was not good news—there was no good news to hear." Her lip quivered even now at the remembrance; but she went on. "I suppose papa was right; he was not steady, my poor Guy, and he grew less so after we parted. At first I hoped that my love might help him; for he knew I would be true and wait until he had got on, and won papa's consent. And papa was not unjust, doctor; he would have given it if— Please do not mind my crying; but I can't talk about that time. I don't think my poor Guy could work or keep to anything for long, and I daresay he had many temptations; but oh! even when I heard it, I knew God had never been so merciful as when He took him away. Poor Guy is safe now. It is better so, far."

There was a dead silence in the room. Only the ashes fell with a soft rustling sound into the hearth, and the flames leaped up and threw a warm glare over the dim green walls, the slender figure in its

black robes, and tender, wistful face. A little small rain was pattering against the window-pane; and in the corner of the room a great basket of hyacinths gave out a sweet, faint fragrance. Magdalen remembered herself with a start, and our eyes met.

"I have pained you," she said sorrowfully. "Dr. Elliot, I am so sorry. Forgive me. Indeed, I never meant to do so. I who owe you so much, and would give so much to be able to repay you, even in the least, for all you have done for me."

"My dear," I answered, lifting her pretty, clinging fingers to my lips, "love does not want repaying. I love you, Magdalen. Did not your father tell you? There is only one thing you can do for me; but I would not have it, though it has been the one hope of my life all these years I have known you, except you can give it me freely—of your own will—my love."

And then I stopped for an answer. What it was I will not tell you. Only, if you think it wrong that she, so fair and beautiful, should have given herself to a dull, middle-aged man like me, I cannot say anything. She will tell you if she has ever repented it—she, my wife, and the mother of my children, sitting with her hand in mine while I say this.

And the house across the street has had other tenants for more than ten years now.

WAR PRICES.

THAT war is a wasteful, as well as a bloody business, is beyond dispute. Bellona Victrix, or Victa, for that matter, runs up terrible bills. But something more than this homely truism is needed to account for the aureole of extravagance, loose-fingered expenditure, and subsequent self-denial, which encircles the rugged brow of war. Why should so many of our middle-class householders glance up so apprehensively at the storm-cloud darkling on the political horizon, when no immediate danger can be feared for kith and kin, for goods and gear? Of old time, as we know, a rat in a besieged town sold for its weight in silver, and a pigeon, or a scrap of mutton, for its equipoise in sterling gold, but the Channel protects us from mishaps like these.

When Europe's master, Napoleon Imperator, fulminated his Berlin decrees against us, shut out our commerce, robbed our

factories, and leagued in hostility to Britain more than half the Continent, English prices were fabulously high. A shilling a quart for ale, a shilling a loaf for bread, heavy custom-house dues, a crushing excise, weighed upon the country. In person, or in purse, all the world was taxed. There was a real ballot for the militia. A very genuine press-gang went about by night kidnapping unwary Britons to serve their country at sea. Champagne was a guinea a bottle; claret fifteen shillings; tea was a close monopoly; and sugar came in under convoy at eighteenpence a pound. Yet England bore all this gaily. Never were there so many carriages and livery servants, country theatres so crammed, or country ball-rooms so crowded, as during the old war.

That the mere rumour of a coming war sends up the quicksilver in the sensitive price-barometer, is a phenomenon that has been known and studied for the last half century. When the Crimean storm was brewing vaguely in the far-off east, a sudden tide-wave, which began in Central Europe, carried up the prices of most perishable commodities; and they have never since, with the exception of bread, sunk to their former level. Horses, forage, corn, and cattle, provisions, wheeled carriages, hides, and eather, all rose abruptly in value.

There is something piteous, at the present time, in the anxiety with which Paterfamilias, in a household of moderate means, scans his telegrams each morning at the breakfast-table, just as at haytime an amateur farmer eyes the heavens in fearful quest of the coming storm-cloud. Still more tremulous is the alarmed curiosity with which some spinsters and widows rustle over the leaves of the newspaper, eager at once to know the worst that can be known, and to cast a mental plumb-line, as it were, to the very depths of misfortune. Yet the three Misses Minikin, of Laurel Villas, Camberwell, and Mrs. Major Green, H.E.I.C.S., once of Dustypore, and now of Upper Norwood, S.E., scarcely seem as though Mars, that truculent deity, could effect much to spoil the modest comfort in which they live. Camberwell is, at any rate, beyond the reach of the marauding Cossack, and Penge Hill impregnable to the most dashing commander that ever led a Russian raid.

In sober truth, the enemies, whom people of limited means chiefly dread, are domestic, not foreign foes. The invasion they appre-

hend is a foray upon their slender balance at the bankers. The "butcher's bill," that grim adjunct of victory or defeat, which they fear the most, is one delivered by a mottle-faced, blue-vested lad in the employ of Messrs. Chopper and Block. They have no ripening corn for hostile horse to trample down, but Slack the baker is equal to the occasion, and can send up "cottages" and "households" to ascend, as deftly as any military blower-up of hamlets.

Were it not for war prices, perhaps, the position of the fundholder would be one of too serene security. Safe in his snug dealings with the auriferous Old Lady of Threadneedle Street, the possessor of a fixed income might survey the struggles of others with the lazy satisfaction of the Horatian landsman looking on at the storm-tossed mariners striving with wave and wind. Factories might close, and the whir of spindles, and the clang of the steam-hammer give place to a dull silence, broken only by the wail of hungry children, but still the dividends would be as punctual as the setting and rising of the sun. Even the prospect of a heightened income-tax can be borne with philosophy, when every added penny is known to add some seven-hundred thousand sterling pounds to the paying, and, therefore, fighting force of the nation. But inflammation of the weekly bills is a disorder not to be endured without grumbling.

No doubt, in war-time, some legitimate increase in the cost of living may fairly be looked for. Freights, to begin with, are higher, and maritime insurance raised, even when privateering is a defunct institution. Then, the labour market is disarranged, and trade is jostled out of some of its old grooves, and some of its principal channels are stopped. So much may be admitted; but we must admit, too, that there are always those who seek to earn an unholy profit by the public calamity, and to turn a dishonest penny by the war.

The first fear, the first flush, of one of those mighty wrestling-matches between rival nations which we call war, is held by timid and credulous people to excuse everything. They meekly submit to be mulcted by a tacit confederacy of middlemen, a "ring" of retailers who stand between them and the wholesale dealer. Poor Miss Matilda Minikin would believe nearly any statement by which the glib grocer chooses to account for the fact that tea, and butter, and French eggs, and Lambeth candles,

are all suddenly dearer. Mrs. Major Green will bow her meek neck to the yoke, and allow the butcher to add a penny a pound for the joint, and twopence for the choice tidbits, because Britannia's sword is bare. The very cabmen, but for deficient education, might extort an extra sixpence by the help of the same cuckoo cry.

The fact is, that war—far off, unseen war—is a blustering, blatant bully, and, like other bullies, loses half his terrors when looked fairly in the face. A little consideration would suffice to show us, how few of the commodities which we really need can be much enhanced in price by the effects of such a contest as that with which we are threatened. Mere alarm, blundering, and confusion, all inseparable from a great war, will aid in raising the value of what our French neighbours describe as articles of the first necessity, but self-interest and greed will do much more.

We in England are much better off, so far as supplies are concerned, than were our grandfathers during the long years during which they tried conclusions with the Corsican. There is not even a partial blockade to dread. Breadstuffs, in case of a bad harvest, will come to us as surely as water finds its level. There is corn in Egypt, ay, and in sun-kissed California and Upper India as well—this last an unexpected granary for the feeding of Western Europe. Nobody can meddle with our cargoes of ice-packed American meat, and nothing short of rinderpest and Orders in Council will keep Dutch cattle out of our ports. Sugar, whether from French beetroot or Cuban cane, will still be duly lodged in bonded warehouses, and no cordon will exclude from our harbours and our homes the produce of mine and vineyard, of plantation and prairie, in all quarters of the modern habitable world.

Very unlike our own was the position of our predecessors in the days of Corunna, Walcheren, and Torres Vedras. Corn Laws compelled the Briton of that time to measure his daily bread by the amount of grain grown in these islands, but, had there been no prohibitive duty, there was no one ready to deal with us for foreign wheat. We could not do business with the king's enemies. And even when America was at peace with us, she had not as yet learned to grow for our market. No foreign meat, alive or dead, reached us. The roast beef of Old England—and very dear it was—could not be eked out by alien joints. The six hundred million of Continental eggs,

the turkeys, fowls, and fruit, the Ostend butter, and Ostend rabbits, were then impossible exotics. And farmers rubbed their hands, and chuckled over inflated prices, while riotous mobs poured hungry-eyed into the street, to break windows and sack the shops of unpopular bakers.

A little prudence and firmness, a little sense and spirit, may enable John Bull to withstand what seems like an organised conspiracy against his pocket. But these excellent qualities are not widely enough distributed, for any very sanguine hopes to be entertained on such a subject. A great many of those with whom we rub shoulders every day—worthy folks enough, and endowed with most of the negative virtues—are mere moral molluscs, as destitute of intellectual backbone as if they had been born jellyfish. And such as these are the hereditary prey of any plausible tradesman who can but secure a hearing for his string of fluent common-places.

The very rumour of the coming strife, the ominous shake of the head as the whispered word "war prices" is passed from lip to lip, as though it were a Cabinet secret or the countersign of the Rosicrucians, has a disturbing effect upon the nerves of the timid. The extended wings of that Black Eagle, to which the late Dr. Croly used to pen such admiring verses, seem to produce over a certain class of minds something of the effect which is caused among a covey of partridges when the hawk hovers in the blue sky. Nor is it surprising that a good many sharp-sighted persons should look forward to making the best of so inviting an opportunity. When the overcharge is a thing daily and helplessly anticipated, it would hardly be in human nature to refrain from imposing it. And yet, as reaction and resistance must come sooner or later, we might well parody the saying about war, by protesting that extravagance in war prices is a game at which, were customers wise, tradesmen would not play.

STRANGE WATERS.

BY R. E. FRANÇILLON,

AUTHOR OF "OLYMPIA," "PEARL AND EMERALD," &c. &c.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER X. "ARIA DIVENGO, E FUOCO."

JOHN MARCH had been absolutely earnest in his resolve not to be present at the first performance of Cleopatra.

It would have been too intensely painful; and, therefore, by a law as certain as that of gravitation, he found himself hidden away in an obscure corner near the ceiling of the theatre when the conductor's bâton fell for the first chord. Nobody was likely to look for him there, nor were the gods likely to recognise the composer in this queer intruder among them. His will not to be present had only proved strong enough to make him skulk in like a criminal, to witness the triumph of art and his own glory.

It was more than pain—it was a hideous sensation when dead silence followed the first fall of the bâton. He could follow with his eyes the blasts of the brass, and the sweep of the bows, and the gestures of the conductor; it was like a nightmare, well known to experienced sleepers, in which one dreams of and strains after inaudible sound. It was all acted before his eyes, it all lived in his brain, but there was no link between the silent action without and the silent music within. The whole air seemed heaving with a Cleopatra that would not come, or rather that died before it had time to be born. And yet the brass was blown and fingered, and the strings were swept as if by an orchestra of madmen, as content as the sane are to waste their energies in doing nothing. Or it may be that even such would be the hidden music, everywhere about us always, but pitched too high or too low for our senses, if our eyes could be opened while our ears remained closed. There, however, sat John March—alone unable to hear one note of the music that he himself had made.

Were it possible to hear with one's eyes, he would have heard, for he listened with them intensely, trying to see the sounds. He knew his own work too well to lose his place or his way one moment among all the complicated bars. Perhaps in truth he did hear better with his dead ears than the house at large; but it was only as a waking ghost may be called more alive than a sleeping man. The overture ended. He saw a faint fluttering of hands; but what did it mean? In his solitary visions that close had been drowned in a thunder of applause, proclaiming sudden victory; he had seen the evil spirits clapped out of the temple windows, never to return. It might be so, for all he knew.

He dared not ask a question of any chance neighbour, for he would have to

demand a written answer; and what should a deaf man be doing at an opera? Suppose, however, anybody should address him? For the gods are as sociable as their inferiors in the stalls are otherwise. He had no need to be afraid, however, for the god must have been sociably disposed indeed who would have tried to get up a conversational *entr'acte* with such a neighbour. But, for fear of such a chance, he would not let his eyes wander, and kept them, till the curtain rose, consciously upon the chandelier.

Was it triumph? Was it defeat? One or the other, and that supremely, it must be—no moderate success could be the destiny of the Cleopatra. Nothing unheroic could be its destiny. Lost in his corner he watched hungrily through two acts, and watching Celia in a growing agony. He knew, when he came, that he was courting unendurable pain—the concentration of his whole life into three terrible hours. He tried to translate every movement of her lips into sound, that he might compare it with the ideal perfection which the deaf man, among the whole house, was able to hear.

And so he listened with all his eyes till the critical third act was half through. Then, just before the grand crisis itself, he saw the tenor hand Celia her first bouquet. And then!

What happened then? He saw the false orchestral start—he saw Celia standing before the flaring footlights as if petrified into dumbness; he saw the house flutter; what could it all mean? His neighbouring gods were craning over the railing, and many of those below were rising in their stalls. Surely Celia had not broken down now—that would be too tragic a jest even for destiny. He, too, half rose from his seat and leaned forward. No; it was no common fiasco; no ordinary turning of swine to rend a giver of pearls. It was the utter, ignominious failure of the only possible Cleopatra in the old world of song. The great work was strangled while being born.

His whole soul turned faint and sick. His will felt paralysed; and, if it had remained to him, what could he do? He could not swoop down among them all, and by impossible magic call the dead work back to life again. That minute while Celia stood mute felt petrified into a century. He could have cried out in his despair. No mere baffled artist has seen what he saw—the defeat of Art for ever

because a girl had lost her voice or her memory.

How long did it last?

All at once, a woman swept forward across the stage. At least she looked like a woman; unless they wear black velvet and diamonds in the spirit world. Was it Cleopatra herself come straight from dead Egypt to vindicate the glory of her own tragedy? It might have been. For a real moment she stood silent and calm, though even from so far off he could see her bosom heave. Then she made the slightest sign with her arm—half to the house, to command a hush; half to the orchestra. There was no disobeying; the house became hushed, and the orchestra began once more.

He saw that she sang. And then, before the last notes of the great scena had died upon her lips, he saw a storm. We know what no mere instinct could tell the man who had not seen Noëmi Baruc since she was a child—it was she, not Celia, who alone in the whole world could sing Andrew Gordon's Cleopatra; something more was wanted than to sing the notes in tune and time. The grand voice which had hitherto wasted itself in singing for diamonds seemed inspired, and swept away the house in a whirlwind of song. Divine Art was spreading the wings of diviner Nature, and scattering flame as it flew.

Ears need not hear to catch the electric thrill of such a fire; he could see; and as yet he could not wait to question. Perhaps that voice, so used for once, would have turned the veriest trash into glory; perhaps, after all, the Cleopatra, for all its skill, deserved to fail. Or perhaps the great voice required the highest art of its highest flying—who can tell, or need care to tell? After all, Cleopatra was made to sing; not to plod through with poor Celia's tired throat and weary heart, but to soar over, as in free air, and to pelt the hearers in flying with its thorny phrases as lightly as if they were flowers. Even those who knew her best, Lady Quorne, Ilma Krasinski, Prosper, did not at once recognise the waning prima donna in this sudden meteor. Her voice failing—she growing old? If this was sunset, sunrise is but a feeble thing, and noontide nowhere.

Such a storm as followed this unlooked-for and inexplicable intrusion is not known in a century of song. The suddenness, the

contrast, the completeness of triumph struck all alike, until the whole house had but one heart, and that was Clari's. Not only did her voice work like magic, but her presence was a spell as she stood and sung, not acting, hardly stirring indeed, but letting music rush on without guidance to its full tide. Art must have been there, but it was as if she were herself creating the music as it came. Every note was a heart-beat; and every beat was answered in unison. Yes—surely John March had been not Andrew Gordon; he had been Pygmalion, Prometheus. He had made, not a score but a soul.

Portatemi il diadema—col mio sangue
Desij divini sorgono dal cuor;
Aria divengo, e fuoco—

It was Noëmi Baruc whom he heard!

It was for her voice, and no other, that he had given his Cleopatra song; her voice only that had sounded through his ears while he dreamed of all that song might mean; her voice, of which Celia's had been but the echo and the shade. It was even thus he had heard it sung—no, not thus even in his fullest dreams. He had dimly guessed, but never knew, all it would mean to hear this great work of his, his whole mind, turned into life by the voice which had inspired all its best—the voice of the one woman whom in all his days he had ever loved, and that so much as to make him hate her very name. For when love calls itself hate we may be sure that it has never died. And now she, who had betrayed him to the Philistines for gold, was turning the dreams of darkness into daylight truth and more.

It was no dream that he heard. He had felt a bewildering rush, as a torrent of water, through his ears and his brain, and then the voice of Noëmi followed; the same, only fuller and richer than of old, even as this woman who sang was statelier and more queenlike than Noëmi.

But that she, of all humankind, whether in the body or in the spirit, should have come to take the burden of the battle of Art from poor Celia's feeble fingers! Through what roads had they gone to such an end? The years might shrivel away till five-and-twenty years ago became closer than yesterday; but this was a greater miracle. Had she been defying his once more living ears with the melody of some stock opera—but that she should be filling them with Cleopatra, and in this wise! He clung to the rail in front of

him, bewildered with his new-found sense, which could hardly bear the strain. He was in the shadow of the Colosseum once more, only with his vision fulfilled.

Aria divengo, e fuoco—

Yes, it was indeed all flame and air, and he felt his whole soul flying, forgetful of all common life, he knew not where or whither. But this was Noëmi, and this was Cleopatra, both in one.

When he opened his eyes again, he was no longer among the gods in the gallery. But, wherever he had flown, it was not to any heaven yet higher. He was in an inferior refreshment-room, in the upper regions of the theatre, surrounded by strange faces—and by strange tongues too; his ears were still unclosed. He was stretched on a hard bench, with a bearded Frenchman at his head, and a long-haired German at his shoulder—for the musical gods are of many nations—and a British barmaid with a glass of brandy at his side. There were indeed too many Samaritans from a medical point of view, for a man in a fit is sure to draw. Something had happened to him, he knew; something bewildering, strange. But he had neither strength nor courage to seek for any link wherewith to bind his vision to reality. Had it ever been? He closed his eyes, and turned his face from them all. If it were false, let him at least hold to it one minute more. But—yes, that was true, if all the rest of the universe were a dream and a lie.

"Stand back there, if ye please," said a harsh voice, roughly. "Where is the man?" The man, still clinging to his wonderful dream, neither looked nor moved, though he felt his wrist held firmly but gently. He could not know the voice; but the touch did not feel quite strange. All his senses were coming back, quivering like over-strained strings. Then another hand paused for a moment over his heart, and he was let go. "Somebody must go for the manager," said the same voice again. Give him this," and he wrote a few words in pencil. "And you'd better all go back to your places. I'll stay here."

The Cleopatra was not over, then? But that mattered little—if the spell had not been broken, it was in safe hands. Even as he lay there, with closed eyes to keep the dream in, he could hear his own music through the door, and, now and again, a

voice sailing as a ship on its sea. And the applause seemed never to cease, but only to rise and fall, like a wind in the night time.

"What is all this?" said another voice. "A man is vanished? I am no medicine. What for do you send for me? Send for a cab, and I shall pay."

"I am a surgeon; my name is Comrie, and I sent for you. Are you the manager?"

"I am—Prosper."

"This is Miss March's father. She cannot come to him here."

"Ah! Yes; that is he. Then he shall die; yes, if he shall. What the diable makes the deaf old fool in this gallery? Yes; I shall tell you, and I shall tell all the world, that have ears, that he and Clari have conspire. Miss Celia! Bah! she is not worth her salt; I shall make a box for her ears. Ah!—"

He had not been drinking; but he was plainly in a towering rage. He clapped his hands to his own ears, to keep out the noise of the waves which were the sea of Heaven itself to him who had made them. What did such a victory mean to him? The triumph of Clari, to whom he must go down on his knees, and whom he must re-engage on her own terms.

"Yes," said Comrie, quietly. "But, meanwhile, he must be carried where his daughter may come to him."

"You shall dictate to me in my own house? No!"

"Yes," said Comrie, still more quietly. "And you will help me to carry him, if you please."

Something in the surgeon's tone made Prosper look at the surgeon's hands. They were larger and heavier than even an angry man would care to feel. Comrie passed one arm round the patient and raised him.

"No; I don't think I need trouble you to help," he said to Prosper. "Only go first, and lead the way; and let it be so that none of the play-people see us as we go."

"I wish he had broke his neck!" raved Prosper. "But never mind; he is a cheat—he is a fraud! I shall tell all the world. One shall know how they conspire, these English! Yes; one shall know. I tell you," he announced to the world, as at present represented by Comrie and the barmaid, "that they conspire. I shall prove my words; it is a gang. The public shall not be made a fool. He makes a part; he teaches his mistress behind my

back; he makes his girl break down; his mistress is there! Ah! it is well arranged!"

John March opened his eyes.

"There goes the last," he said, "in the shape of a lie!"

And even while he spoke, a new blast of applause swept along the passage and through the door, as if, indeed, the last of the unclean spirits of folly and falsehood, whom it was Cleopatra's mission to conquer, had flown to its own place.

Prosper was in no mood to notice miracles. He who could only see a vulgar fraud in a sublime self-assertion of nature in the face of all conventional things was himself deaf and blind. But Comrie forgot all else—the folly that had drawn him from his books after Celia's voice, even the immediate need of the moment; he could only say, in quick speech, that contrasted strangely with his common drawl:

"You must have lied hard to make him hear. Why, neither Morel nor an earthquake would have done that; but Nature's a terrible wonder! When did you hear?"

"How can I tell? Send for Celia."

"Yes," said Comrie, absently. "The human ear is a wonder," he began, as he easily carried the musician's small and wasted body down back staircases and along corridors. "Perhaps it is the most wonderful thing in the world. I'd give mine, and welcome, to understand them. I wish I'd thought, when I had ye under my fingers, of giving ye a good sound blow with the side of a book or the palm of my hand. Some shock ye must have had—and that a big one—to clear the meatus internus; for I'll swear the serous secretion, if that was the mischief, gathered no nearer than that to the membrana tympani. Maybe a pistol fired off at the auricle might have broken the thing; but that might have broken the drum as well. It's best as it is; but why Nature should be so fond of getting us into scrapes, unless for vanity, just to show how cleverly she can get us out again, is very hard to say. Sometimes I think she's a physician: and then, again, I think she's but a fool. And, maybe, it's not so hard to be both—not at all so hard."

Not without cause had the old anecdote come into his mind; for was not he himself a physician? And was he not also a fool? Wise men do not crowd up gallery stairs to listen to voices that they have taught themselves, by dint of philosophy, to despise.

But that was only a passing thought.

The possibilities of what may happen in the inaccessible labyrinth of the internal ear were more than enough to absorb his thoughts to the end of the last corridor—what sudden spasm of muscle or nerve, and under what conditions, might have freed from the burden of years the most delicate and the most mysterious of all created things. After all, what was even Celia's voice to the ear of Celia's father? It should be nothing, any way; for who could tell on what spring of discovery the surgeon might not be putting his finger—of discovery that from his prosaic point of view would serve the world better than a thousand Cleopatras or other such bundles of idle song? None observed the queer procession as it moved to the region of the house behind the curtain—the enraged impresario stalking in front, and the gaunt Scotch doctor carrying the grotesque, dwarfish figure of the musician as if it were a child's. Prosper led them to his own room. Comrie laid his patient on a sofa; but John March sat up, and once more said, "Send for Celia." Comrie started from his own mental travels—there was such a strange note of satisfied triumph in his voice, such a strangely weary look in his eyes.

Meantime, while the composer thus hovered between earth and air, the Cleopatra swept on gloriously to its close. There was no doubt about it now—there had not been since the true Cleopatra had taken her rightful place upon the stage. Whether the work was to live or die, that night would live for ever. It seemed even to Noëmi that she had never sung in her life before; she knew she had never sung as now. All the hidden and stifled genius in her swelled up and out. There are those who look back upon that night as their one night of song. She did not stop to think of what the magic could be that compelled her to sing the hateful and hated Cleopatra, to save it from ruin, and to crown her arch-enemy with glory. It was her arch caprice of them all. She only sang right out and right on till the curtain fell for the last chord, and left her at once the proudest and humblest woman in the world.

Was it simply for her lost child's sake that she had done this thing, after all?

Not one person on the stage spoke to

her when the curtain fell. There are times when a whole firmament lies between us and the common world. Prosper was not in the way; not even Ilma came to her behind the scenes. The fire was still upon her; she did not begin to think how she was to meet the baby whom she had lost in another world. Her heart felt too full even for the old hunger; too full even to feel alone. She had forgotten even to look for the face that had summoned her from above, as by a spell, to the stage.

She was gathering up her black velvet and passing alone through the wing when she was stopped abruptly; and she recognised her acquaintance of Saragossa Row.

"Madame," he said, "where can I find Miss March? Where is she?"

"Miss March?" she asked dreamily.

"Yes—she must be found; I don't know this place; she must see her father at once; there may be no time to lose."

Noëmi leaned against the woodwork, and felt for her fan.

"Her father? No time?" she was trying to comprehend common words.

He thought she did not understand English. "Where can I find Miss March?" he asked in French. "I must find her instantly. Her father is very ill."

"Her father—Andrew Gordon? He is ill?"

"Very ill, madame."

"Ah, Gran Dio! Yes; take me; I will come."

"I must find Miss March—his daughter, madame. For God's sake—if you know this place—tell me where she is to be found. There is no time to lose."

"Gran Dio! Do you not hear? I will come—now!"

"To find Miss March? Then let us lose no time."

"No—no! To find him! Now!"

"Pardon, madame. His daughter—"

Then the soul of Noëmi Baruc went back into the body of Giulia Clari, and—swore.

"Corpo d'un Cane! I am his Wife, monsieur."

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